1: Melamid K-4 (no date) 1953 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4
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POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF TRUCIAL 'OMAN AND QATAR

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Q 178 T 178

UNTIL the 1930's pirating, slave trading, and arms smuggling were the occupations of the native population on the southeast shores of the Persian Gulf, and they largely determined the status of the region in international affairs. Since then the oil industry, with its manifold economic and political aspects, has begun to replace these earlier "trades." The effect of this change offers an unusual insight into the evolution of states and their territorial and maritime sovereignty. Despite the present importance of the Persian Gulf in world affairs, information on Trucial 'Oman, and to a smaller extent on Qatar, is scarce and contradictory.

The Physical and Historical Background

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Physically, the south coast of the Persian Gulf is uninviting. Shallow waters with dangerous reefs fringe the beaches, and the bars across the mouths of the many inlets and coastal creeks make them inaccessible to the smallest ocean-going vessels. The shore line forms the margin of a low, undulating plateau with a surface of sand or loose stones, which merges to the south into the even less hospitable and little-known desert of the Rub' al Khali. Occasionally the plateau is interrupted by shallow salt pans or by insignificant hills that may expose the bedrock, mainly Eocene limestone. There are no continuous wadies, or any other marked features. The low northern extension of the mountains of 'Oman, which terminates in the rugged and deeply indented peninsula of Masandam, forms the eastern boundary of the region. Rainfall is estimated at less than five inches a year, falling in a few winter showers. Temperatures on the coast are high: averages range from the high sixties in January to the nineties in July. Humidity is also high. Because of the oppressive summer weather, the oil company operating in Qatar suspends the work of its seismographic exploration crews from May to November. However, the humidity does not penetrate far into the interior, and exploratory activities in, for example, the neighboring inland oil fields of Saudi Arabia continue throughout the year.

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The vegetation is scanty. Economically useful plants that grow without irrigation can feed only camels, sheep, and goats. Aside from a stable kept by the sheikh of Ajman, no horses are reported anywhere, and even the number of cattle is small.

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133 pearl boats, avoid these waters. It is here that the principal Oman pearl banks lie. The most important islands off the Trucial Coast are Bu Musa, which contains a red ochre mine; Tunb; Sir Bu Na'air; Yas, where there is an R.A.F. emergency landing ground; and Dalmah.

132 The climate is extremely severe in the summer months. From May to October, the combined heat and humidity are very trying to Europeans; temperatures of 115° F. and humidity of 98° are common. In the winter months, from November to February, it is pleasantly cool by day and cold at night, but frost is unknown; at this time the weather on the coast is frequently boisterous. Rainfall averages about 5 in. a year, and falls chiefly in mid-winter, when storms are extremely severe. On 30th November, 1944, the Indian Meteorological department at Sharjah recorded a rainfall of 1.75 in. within twenty minutes and a wind of 78 miles an hour.

162 Tribally and racially the people of the Trucial Coast are very mixed, Arabs, Persians, Baluchis, Hindus, and a large number of Arab slaves and their progeny forming the bulk of the population. The Bedouins, who some years ago were estimated to number 8,000, are mostly confined to the open desert, although they are now more amiably disposed to the settled tribes and townships than formerly; the largest of the Bedouin tribes in Oman is that of the Beni Qitab, whose ruler is the Sheikh Mahommed bin Ali. The Bedouins live chiefly by their livestock, although some nowadays take part in pearling and fishing during the season. In winter time, when there is a fine amount of herbage for their herds, they scatter and move from encampment to encampment, but in summer they congregate in large numbers around the more copious wells in the desert. The Jiri plain in the north and Bainumah in the west, are favourite places.

241 There is little agriculture in Trucial Oman. Dates can be grown in most places, although the Arabs are extremely conservative and are averse from attempting new projects. The only large-scale date plantations are at Falaj-al-Ali and Djaidh. Inland, west of the Shimailiyah mountains and the Sir Wadhi, some cereals, wheat, tobacco and *jowari* are grown, and vegetables can be raised by means

231 of well irrigation. Cows, donkeys, camels, goats and sheep are kept, and plenty of poultry, but little appears to be known of diseases of the latter, and in 1944 they died in large numbers. The normal food for cattle is fish and boiled date stones, and herbage when it can be found. Except for the famous stables of Sheikh

CHAPTER VII

WITH the onset of Spring the rains had entirely ceased and, apart from occasional dust-storms and gales, the weather was ideal for flying purposes. Dust-storms were not frequent on the Trucial Oman Coast, but when they did occur they gave us considerable trouble and caused fairly long delays in the services. We were in the centre of a vast belt of sandy desert, extending from North Africa in the west to the Sind in the east, and anywhere within this region sand- and dust-storms were to be expected in the spring and summer months. Their origin seems to be similar to that of a whirlpool or typhoon; masses of hot air rise in spiral directions, creating a vacuum in the centre. The radius of these spirals may vary from a few feet to several hundred yards, and they suck the top layers of sand high into the air, where it remains suspended for hours; a gale often follows, and several miles of desert may be darkened by clouds of sand.

A severe sand-storm resembles a London fog of the 'pea soup' variety. Visibility is limited to a few yards; sand gets in one's eyes, nose and mouth, and beneath one's clothes; it creeps under tightly-shut doors and through closed windows; it penetrates into food cupboards and refrigerators and, more serious still, sometimes gets into aero engines and cylinders. Aircraft will never attempt to fly through a sand-storm and can easily climb above one, but pilots refuse to land in such conditions. This often means a delay of hours or even days, expecially when more than one airfield on the route is similarly affected.

With the Ensign aircraft which were then in use between Cairo and Karachi, it was customary for planes to land at both Sharjah and Jiwani, on the Baluchistan coast, to re-fuel. Since both places were subject to corresponding meteorological conditions, both frequently suffered from sand-storms at the same time; the result was that aircraft were unable to over-fly Sharjah and land at Jiwani, as was done during the heavy rains, but had to wait at Bahrain until conditions improved.

To-day, with fewer stops for aircraft, they are able to reach their

133 offshore. The interior country in the north is hilly, with an average elevation of about 500 feet, but toward the southwest it becomes progressively flatter and more desolate. The portion from Abu Dhabi to Khor al Odaid is barren and virtually uninhabited.

132 The climate is particularly trying in the summer months from May to October, when temperatures of 115° F. and humidity readings of 90 to 98 per cent are frequently recorded. In contrast, the days from November to February are agreeably cool, while the nights often are cold. The rainfall is irregular, and normally approximates 4 to 5 inches a year. It is usually concentrated in sudden and violent storms during the mid-winter months.

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

161 162 The population of Trucial Oman is not accurately known, but in 1951 it was estimated at about 80,000, including Bedouin 144 tribes totaling possibly 8,000. The settled inhabitants are of mixed racial stock. They are predominantly Arabs, but Negro admixtures, descendants of former slaves from Africa, and communities of Baluchis, Iranians and Indians are prominent. Except for 795 a few Hindus, the majority are Moslems. Most of the Arabs belong to the Wahhabi branch of the Sunni sect of Islam.

468 228 The chief occupations of the people are pearl diving, fishing, shipbuilding and date cultivation. Some of the best pearling reefs in the Persian Gulf are found off the Trucial Coast, and Dibai long has been recognized as the center of activity in the southern Gulf region. The industry has declined within recent years, but, in more favorable times, thousands of pearling vessels are said to have put out from Trucial Oman ports each season from early summer to November.

241 Agriculture is of secondary importance, being confined to areas in which water is available for irrigation. Date groves exist along the coast as far west as Abu Dhabi, and small amounts of millet, wheat, tobacco

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Trucial Oman MK4

133 The coast on the Gulf of Oman is bolder, the hills sometimes coming down to the water's edge, and the hilly tract inland, perhaps 20 miles in breadth, is the highest part of the whole territory. The interior of Trucial Oman, approached from the Persian Gulf, consists of a low and sandy maritime plain (*taff*) almost entirely unsuited for tillage, though not without natural vegetation and even wood, and provided with enough wells and water-holes to support a scanty Bedouin population. Beyond the *taff* are inland plains containing tracts with occasional cultivation, of which *Jiri*, *Dheid*, and *Liwah* are the best known.

Climate

• 132 Between November and April the heat is bearable and the nights are cool. From May to September the climate is excessively hot. The rainfall, which is confined to the winter months, is believed to be about 5 in., and would therefore approximate to that of Bahrein (see p. 312).

Population

162 619 The ethnology of the tribes inhabiting Trucial Oman is often intricate and perplexing. The tribes which are numerically the most important are the following:

Beni Yās, in the Abu Dhabi Principality (10,000 settled, 2,000 nomadic); Sharqiyīn, in the *Shameilīyah* tract and *Ras el-Kheimah* district in the Oman promontory (7,000 settled); Āl 'Ali, chiefly at *Umm el-Qaiwein* (6,750 settled); Āl Bu Maheir, in all coast towns (5,500); Sūdān, in coast towns and *Bu Mūsa* Island (5,000); Na'īm, in Central Oman promontory (3,500 settled and 1,200 nomad); Za'āb, in *Jezīrat el-Hamra* and *Khōr Kalba* in the Shārjah Principality (3,500); Ahl Ras el-Kheimah, in the town and district of that name (2,000); Shihūh (2,500) and Taneij (2,500 settled and 1,500 nomad), in the same places; Beni Qitab (2,000 nomad), in Shārjah territory; Shweihiyīn (2,000), in *Dibai* and *Shārjah*. Several of these tribes are also represented in the Sultanate of Oman, in El-Qatar, and in Bahrein. In addition may be mentioned 1,500 *Hūwalah* in *Shārjah* town; 1,400 Baluchis at *Dibai*; about 2,500 Persians in *Abu Dhabi* and *Dibai* towns, *Khōr Fakkān* and *Ghāllah*; some hundreds of Hindus in the coast towns, and numerous negro slaves.

162 665 795 The total population has been estimated at over 80,000 only 8,000 being nomadic. The people are divided between the Hināwi